

Standard 8-6: The student will demonstrate an understanding of South Carolina's development during the early twentieth century.

8-6.4 Explain the causes and the effects of changes in South Carolina culture during the 1920s, including Prohibition, the boll weevil, the rise of mass media, increases in tourism and recreation, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, and the Southern Literary Renaissance. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand / Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In 5th grade, students summarized changes in daily life in the boom period of the 1920s, including the improved standard of living; the popularity of new technology such as automobiles, airplanes, radio, and movies; the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Migration; Prohibition; and racial and ethnic conflict. (5-4.1)

In United States history, students will explain cultural responses to the period of economic boom and-bust, including the Harlem Renaissance; new trends in literature, music, and art; and the effects of radio and movies (USHC-7.2). Students will also explain the causes and effects of the social conflict and changes that took place during the 1920s, including the role of women and their attainment of the right to vote, the "Red Scare" and the Sacco and Vanzetti case, the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, immigration quotas, Prohibition, and the Scopes trial (USHC-7.3).

It is essential for students to know:

Prohibition was a failure in South Carolina, just as it was in the rest of the country, but it created a social phenomenon. It led to an increase in crime and corruption as 'bootleggers' and 'moonshiners' violated the law. This prompted a backlash of conservatives who abhorred the moral decline that such flagrant violation of the law exemplified. Blue laws were strictly enforced and the Ku Klux Klan found a new target in the immoral bootleggers and immigrant groups who continued to drink.

The agricultural economy, already suffering from overproduction and the loss of foreign markets, sagged further as the **boll weevil** attacked the cotton crop. By the end of the 1920s, cotton, like rice before it, was no longer a viable crop in the Lowcountry. Farmers turned to other crops such as peaches and livestock. Drought, erosion and soil depletion further exacerbated the dire conditions in the farming sector. More people emigrated from rural areas to cities in the North and Midwest, including a substantial number of African Americans.

The **mass media** had a significant impact on South Carolina, just as it did on the rest of the country. South Carolinians listened to their radios and went to the movies with a resulting nationalization of culture. South Carolinians learned about flappers and the latest music and dance crazes and even started some, like the Big Apple, named after the African-American nightclub where the steps originated.

In response to the decline of the agricultural and industrial sectors of the economy, South Carolinians attempted to boost **tourism** by opening hotels in Charleston and promoting developments along the coast. The increased number of automobiles made travel possible and visitors from the North were attracted to the climate and culture of the Old South, preserved in the stately homes and buildings of a bygone era.

Responding to criticisms of South Carolina as a cultural wasteland, the **Southern Literary Renaissance** furthered the celebration of South Carolina's heritage. The Poetry Society of South Carolina led this

revival and contributors included Julia Peterkin, who won a Pulitzer Prize for Literature, and DuBose Heyward, who wrote *Porgy*, which later became the opera *Porgy and Bess*.

The 1920s saw a **resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan**. In 1915, the movie *The Birth of a Nation* depicted the origins of the Klan positively as the Redeemers of the Reconstruction era and the saviors of white womanhood, employing traditional racist stereotypes. The movie aroused racist sentiments against African Americans throughout the country. Anti-immigrant sentiments added radicals, immigrants and Catholics to the list of groups targeted by the new Klan. The business climate of the 1920s also contributed to the Klan's resurgence as they used advertising and business organizations to promote membership and gain political power. In the 1920s, the Klan was a national organization with a strong following in the small towns and cities of the Midwest as well as in the South. Seeing themselves as moral regulators, Klansmen targeted bootleggers and gamblers with cross burnings, public beatings and lynching.

It is not essential for students to know

Students do not need to know about notorious criminals of the Prohibition era such as Al Capone. They do not need to know where the boll weevil came from or how it destroyed the cotton crop. Students do not need to know which coastal tourist communities were founded in the 1920s. Students do not need to know about the historic preservation movement that helped make Charleston a tourist destination. They do not need to know other artists of the Southern Literary Renaissance. They do not need to know that Klan leaders were involved in sex scandals and corruption which undermined their claims to moral leadership and caused the Klan to fade from public view.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments would require students to **explain** the causes and effects of changes in South Carolina's culture in the 1920's. Students should also be able to **compare** the effects of Prohibition, the boll weevil, the rise of mass media, increases in tourism and recreation, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, and the Southern Literary Renaissance on the long term health of South Carolina culture and economy.